

Eric Voegelin Society Meeting 2008

Between Wisdom and Knowledge: The Politics of Creativity in a Post-Communist World

Copyright 2008 Andr s L nczi

Statement of the problem

The key to understanding the nature of government is to be found in the old debate between realists and political utopians of many kind. This controversy has several fields including the epistemological issues of political knowledge, the disagreements between philosophers and historians, and the political clashes of liberals with conservatives. As for the status of political knowledge, the first systematic treatment of the subject goes back to Plato and Aristotle. What is the difference between political philosophy or wisdom and practical wisdom? Is it that the first deals with universals and the latter one with the particulars? If it is so, how can we connect the two, for if we fail to do that we might end up with being compelled to admit that political philosophy as political wisdom is totally useless; and historians, who claim to be concerned only with particulars, will gain an upper hand in the debate with philosophers.(1) At the bottom of the political clashes between liberals and conservatives is to be attributed, by and large, to the problem whether government and governing can be limited by rational means like institutions, or, as conservatives often voice, the fundamentals of wielding power always remain the same, i.e. due to man's ambiguous nature, the rules of wielding power do not change. This realistic approach has a long history starting with ancient historians esp. Thucydides or Livy, conceptualized forcefully by Machiavelli, Machiavellian ideas partly taken up by Thomas Hobbes, and the realistic view refashioned by Carl Schmitt among others. On the other hand we have those political utopians like Plato, Locke, Rousseau or John Rawls who thought that political power can be tamed, and by means of justifying institutions man could change the character of politics. By the formal end of communism, we all live in a post-communist world(2), which may have brought about a new situation with regard to the understanding of what government is. The failure of the communist experience, however, has not discredited the different representatives of modern gnosticism. Just the opposite has occurred: the mainstream intellectual trend in a post-communist world has been nurtured by different forms of gnosticism producing a post-post-modern mind that is characterized by a historical determinism, also called 'progress' entailing a cultural self-hatred, a hostility towards every form of 'substantialism' or 'essentialism' thus creating a limitless space for relativity, and a scientific arrogance against faith. Tilo Schabert has been suggesting that in all regimes we have politicians who are 'princes', who â€represent in one person the classical features of political leadership, or to use a classical term, statecraftâ€(3) The princely figures are a type which has â€appeared at all times and all placesâ€ and certainly is not just â€one politician among manyâ€ The princes have common features without copying each other or knowing about each other, and what they are in common is that â€they produce, in a *general* enactment of forms, the form that is enacted by their *own* conduct of governmentâ€ It means that a prince is an originator or creator, an artist whose work cannot be repeated or copied â€ the prince himself is a form that produces unlimited number of variations of government. Tilo Schabert states that â€governing is creativityâ€ and even goes as far as to declare that

“The creativity governs, not the government.” By saying this, he challenges the contemporary mainstream idea of government that is focused on the institutionalized approach to government, and praises the procedure of governing by establishing a set of rules of “good governance.” Contrary to general expectations, I assume that the focus on creativity and accordingly on the political agent has increased due to the rise of the concept of modern legitimacy of rule. Because of the indispensability of legitimacy of wielding power under modern conditions, postcommunist world has just to face the split between the conditions of government and the goals of government – this is a fundamental difference between classical and modern practice of government. By classical standards the conditions and goals of government coincided, under modern conditions the gap between the two could be widened to an absurd degree: a country can be run for good many months without a government (Belgium), or government can be used for the purpose of not to govern – i.e. government is just an excuse to pursue personal or private group interests like in Russia. The split is made possible on the basis of the modern split between political wisdom and practical wisdom, already discussed by first philosophers on the politeia.

In what follows I wish to contribute to the understanding of government by contrasting political wisdom and political (practical) knowledge with the help of the concept of creativity after the formal fall of communism. I argue that postcommunist world has been dominated by gnosticism more than ever. Democracy has become an ideology and esp. feminism is a concentration of all previous gnostic movements. I also claim that the split between logic and rhetorics is a sign that rhetorics and logic has made the natural difference, observed by Aristotle, between political wisdom and practical wisdom an antagonism. As a result, the realist approach to what is political has been sidelined by normative or utopian approaches that mistake the political for the general social character of man's existence. The realist approach would be concerned with acquisition as man's urge in politics, and the normative or utopian would focus on the possible and the institutions that override all personal. The question is still vital: who, and not what, governs?

Between Acting and Making

When Plutarch wrote his *Parallel Lives*, he did not mean to describe how a city or an empire should be governed. What he knew was that cities and empires are run by great men, and greatness depends on the acquisition and practice of moral and intellectual virtues. He also knew that it is deeds rather than words that make a man great. He was also convinced that deeds and their consequences can be compared on the basis of the political effectiveness of political deeds. It is man who governs, and not the gods or institutions. He could draw a parallel between Pericles, who “presided in his commonwealth when it was in its most flourishing and opulent condition, great and growing in power” and Fabius, “who undertook the government in the worst and most difficult times, was not to preserve and maintain the well-established felicity of a prosperous state, but to raise and uphold a sinking and ruinous commonwealth” (Plutarch 2001: Comparison of Fabius and Pericles). And Plutarch did not found his comparison upon considerations of the differences of forms of state – it is man and not the type of political regime that produces differences in political effectiveness. In sharp contrast to antiquity, the modern perception of political greatness and weakness is blurred by institutions

like the constitution, human rights, checks and balances, and by seemingly impersonal and routine-like procedures. Modern conception of governing apparently diminishes the role of the agent, and enhances the impact of political mechanisms. According to Plutarch, following the Aristotelian categorization of the regimes or forms of government, it is not the number of those wielding power would decide which form of state is superior, but the quality of government. He only distinguishes between tyrants and statesmen who observe the laws.⁽⁴⁾ Plutarch does not really deal with the people which can be "distempered", "violent" and "fiery" but the main characteristic of it is that

"A people always minds its rulers best

When it is neither humoured nor oppressed." (Plutarch 2001: The Comparison of Poplicola with Solon)

Plutarch's view on government ultimately rests on wisdom. We know by Aristotle that "the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number, i.e. art (techné), scientific knowledge (epistémē), practical wisdom (phronesis), philosophic wisdom (sophia), intuitive reason (nous)" (Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI., 1139b). Because Aristotle wants to explain what he means by each of these intellectual virtues, he demonstrates "practical wisdom" by saying "that we think Pericles and men like him have practical wisdom, viz. because they can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general; we consider that those can do this who are good at managing households or states." Thus government is a kind of management. According to Plutarch a noble act combines "the highest valour, wisdom, and humanity" just with respect to the comparison of Pericles with Fabius. As a result we can not say that Plutarch favored "art" in matters of managing a state, instead he preferred "practical wisdom". Aristotle is clear about the difference between practical wisdom and art when he writes that "practical wisdom is a virtue and not an art", although it is common in both that "art and practical wisdom deal with things that are variable". Definition of art is based on "things made" and "things done" because "making and acting are different", and "art", like architecture, "is identical with a state of capacity to make, involving a true course of reasoning. All art is concerned with coming into being, i.e. with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker and not in the thing made; for art is concerned neither with things that are, or come into being, by necessity, nor with things that do so in accordance with nature (since these have their origin in themselves). Making and acting being different, art must be a matter of making, not of acting." Thus making implies creating something that has not yet existed and there is no necessity to exist in the future.

But politics is concerned with action, for "Political wisdom and practical wisdom are the same state of mind, but their essence is not the same. Of the wisdom concerned with the city, the practical wisdom which plays a controlling part is legislative wisdom, while that which is related to this as particulars to their universal is known by the general name 'political wisdom'; this has to do with action and deliberation, for a decree is a thing to be carried out in the form of an individual act. This is why the exponents of this art are alone said to 'take part in politics'; for these alone 'do things' as manual labourers 'do things'." So Aristotle seems to exclude creativity from politics since it has to do with action and deliberation. But the last sentence connects the two, the acting and the making. Why are acting and making connected? Because practical wisdom "concerned with the ultimate particular fact" which is emphatically repeated by Aristotle (1141b-

1142a). A politician acts individually but in accordance with practical wisdom that is concerned not only with universals but – it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars – But how can one connect the universals with the particulars? Only through reasoned action, i.e. a politician should – do things – as – manual labourers – do. What the doers do is nothing else than creation – they create things that have not existed before. The difference between acting and making is not absolute, though the form of connection between them may assume several forms. Reasoned action was the old advice. In modernity, however, a new solution was put forward by Hegel, for instance, who recommended that the natural distinction between acting and making could overcome by – history – that can unite thinking and acting, acting and making, the what is and the what ought to be. His suggestion has remained dominant until today.

– The creativity governs, not the government –

One of the most relevant issues about political action is whether Machiavelli described the ideal type of a prince or he went into excesses, thus the force of his teaching should be mitigated as it was suggested by Harvey C. Mansfield in his book on Machiavelli: – With our hindsight from liberal constitutionalism, Machiavelli seems to have gone too far. His statements ring true but his conclusions seem exaggerated, and we fail to take him seriously. We would like to believe that his insights can be retained and his extremism discarded, that his notion of *esecuzione* can be absorbed into modern liberal constitution without the tyrannical requirement of *uno solo* that may give us a shiver or merely quaint. – (Mansfield 1996:314.) But what if Machiavelli's – extremism – is just the core or originality of his teaching? If – discarded – what remains? Mansfield seems to believe that constitutionalism is the remedy for the Machiavellian extremism. If it is true, then modern princes' power should remain within constitutional arrangements, i.e. the prince's scope of creativity is limited seriously. But what if constitutionalism does not really curtail modern leaders' sphere of action? What if, except of life-long domination, modern leaders use new means but their actions do not differ from any – *uno solo* – leadership? And modern leaders can do the same, again, in a limited amount of time, what classical rulers did for as long as fate allowed them to do? I wish to argue that with the extension of democratic institutionalism worldwide, the strict borderline between constitutionalism and *uni solo* leadership or princely governing has always been flexible and superficial, and what Tilo Schabert discovered by combining the universal political wisdom with the practical wisdom of the particulars in his *Boston Politics*, is a strong case for the problematic opposition of the forms of government and the art of politics. If Schabert is right, then not only the classical prince should be reinvented but the classical distinction of the Aristotelian regime typology that is more realistic in terms of what we can call – the best regime – Or at least the distinction between republics and principalities voiced by Machiavelli ought to be taken into account again. If the prince is an eternal type of government, we should also consider Carl Schmitt's concept of decisionism – there is always someone who decides things, and the act of deciding is governing itself. I cannot see why we would regard liberal democracy sharply contrasted with other forms of government – the boundaries are never fixed in politics.

What makes a prince according to Machiavelli? It is having power to execute. Power to execute needs virtue that is hailed by him as Roman virtue to be identified in politics and war. Therefore Machiavellian virtue is the highest value of practical wisdom and could be studied by observing human deeds. But virtue is nothing in itself, "it must be for the sake of something else; its end is acquisition" (Mansfield 1996:13) Acquisition is made mandatory because of necessity: "Necessity means the necessity to acquire; so men cognizant of necessity must devote themselves to acquisition." (Mansfield 1996:15) But what is this necessity?

Machiavelli says that man has a natural desire to acquire. As a consequence necessity is also "natural" and "ordinary" (Machiavelli 1998:8.) Necessity cannot be reduced to one particular thing, since it is a natural condition of one's preserving power. Machiavelli's "necessity" serves a deterministic purpose, the concept of "necessity" paves the way for later thinkers' fundamental teaching about self-preservation. The famous tenet about the unsurmountable distance between *what is* and *what ought to be* (Machiavelli 1998:Ch. 15.), led Machiavelli to study the minimum conditions of power. Eric Voegelin has a point here to add that "who strives to be good must perish among the many who are not good. Hence a prince must do the good or leave it, according to the dictate of necessity (necessitas)" (Voegelin 1998:78) There are two ways of fighting the dilemma that arises out of the tension between the one and the many: the many is unable to discern what is good, so the prince should be aware of this necessity, and very often, instead of using the laws, he must resort to force which is beastly, but unavoidable for the prince to preserve his power, i.e. to be successful.

Otherwise the prince is a creator, he can "create a state" (Machiavelli 1998:20), what is more, he can create a new order. That anyone can be creative is a modern phenomenon, what is more, it has become part of the democratic ideology. (5) The Greeks thought that only a poet can be creative, i.e. the poet can make a brand new thing, the artists simply imitated reality. The Romans had their own word for it ('creatio') but it did not have political meaning. To a large extent Machiavelli became the initiator of modernity because he gave a political meaning to the concept of creation: a politician can also be a creator, and he should be so under certain circumstances. If the changes of time that lift and drop anyone, the most urgent need is to create conditions under which someone can ensure the desired outcome, or at least he can try to control fate or fortune. Accordingly in a world where traditions are no longer binding, creation is not optional but mandatory. It is true for all walks of modern life with special emphasis on politics despite the contradiction that if modern man wants to ensure the outcome, he must rely upon institutions which, due to their internal logic, would easily degenerate into a spiritless bureaucracy, or get corrupted. But institutions are inert in themselves, it is always creation or making that inhale life into them. Governing can be likened to the activity of a physician or a shepherd or a captain of a boat, but such metaphors fail to capture what that activity is what we call governing. Government is empty without creation, and to make things worse, no institutional or constitutional frameworks could change the character of leadership. Even in constitutional orders, including democracies, there is no pattern that could be followed or imitated. A leader is always desperately alone and cannot avoid to create if he wants to preserve his position and power, i.e. to acquire.

The Problem of Political Knowledge: Universal vs. Particular

One of the oldest problems of political knowledge is how to bridge the gap between the universal and the particular. Political realism would dictate that all we can know about politics is description of past political events (history is but the politics of the past) and all generalization is useless, although "political controversy has a natural tendency to express itself in universal terms" because "a man who defends democracy in Athens cannot help using arguments in favor of democracy as such" (Strauss 1989:55) It seems also an unshakeable truth that today's political science still does not want to deal with the question of the best political order. Strauss's words are still relevant: "The most striking difference between classical political philosophy and present day political science is that the latter is no longer concerned at all with what was the guiding question for the former: the question of the best political order." (Ibid.:50) For ancient thinkers the difference was to be studied between political wisdom and practical wisdom, the moderns, esp. from the late 20th century on, having found 'the' best political order, called modern democracy, feel justified not to bother about questions of the 'best political order'. There is no need for political wisdom either. The fundamental mistake is committed in the way they handle political knowledge. Having been satisfied with democracy, they believe that everything can be managed with the practical knowledge of managers. Things should be managed not to be judged " Lenin did actually also believed that. Democracy has also evolved into an ideology that favors the faithful and eliminates the renegades. If democracy is the best form of government than the critics of it should be cherished and not suppressed. The best order cannot be executed because it is the quest of the best order that saves us from ourselves and the actualization of the best regime " this is a universalization of a particular experience, the Western experience, which may and may not be good. A regime is good as long as it can secure liberty for the individuals, whether it is democracy or another form of government, cannot be verified empirically. But looking at politics realistically, the natural tendency to acquire and to preserve cannot be changed by changing the form of government. Machiavelli's prince the archytype of all able leaders, and only the democratic ideology wants us to depart from reality.

What a statesman knows about politics is a mixture of his personal experience, successes and failures, of what he read and heard about politics. The maker or actor of politics, however, is not concerned with generalizing his experience " all he wants is to achieve success, accomplish his plans, and seek support for his deeds including justification for his deeds. In this respect I agree with Tilo Schabert in that "Political science can be as objective, as 'empirical' and as 'hard' and experimental as the natural sciences. Strictly considered, political science is even more experimental than natural science because, to use Vico's words, the "political world surely was made by men, and its principles therefore can be found in the constructive life of our human mind" (Schabert 2005:235) Schabert is a stubborn realist this is why he seems to be resistant to all sort of ideology including the ideology of democracy. A political leader even in a democracy should have to be aware of the nature of power, otherwise he loses his position and his self-esteem. His 'necessitÃ' is to preserve himself with no concern with the aims of his power. A decision is never democratic, only in name, for it cannot be, because creation is always individual " the idea should be born first, the execution comes afterwards. It is very rare that the same idea is born in two or more different minds, but if yes, only one of them is regarded the first " and sometimes it is decided on the basis of power.

How serious the question is just further specified by the exchange between Voegelin and Arendt. Arendt

writes in response to Voegelin: "Professor Voegelin and I are in agreement, my chief quarrel with the present state of the historical and political sciences is their growing incapacity for making distinctions." (Arendt 1994:407) Lack of distinctions, an insight borrowed from Carl Schmitt, is a sign of an overambitious effort to reduce reality to a method or a form of government that overlooks the natural features of politics, such as the nature of execution. Because of the modern needs of one's legitimatization, the nature of things is to be controlled by separating political entities from each other, e.g. separation of powers, as if in reality action could be separated from its own nature. Generalizations in the field of political science, which is a natural tendency, can have effect or relevance if the incessant interplay between acting and thinking is maintained by way of creativity. But one should not forget that even creativity is politicized, it is part of the political practice.

Modern conditions of power, or Plato, the manager

Chaos. The concept of chaos rightly plays a central role in Schabert's argument for the idea that "creativity governs" There are, however, two conflicting views about chaos in our culture. According to Greek authors, chaos preceded order, whereas the Christian account of order, at least the argument of creation which declares that existence is to be thanked to "creatio ex deo", strictly limits creation to God's omniscient planning. The Greek 'gaping void' is described by Ovid as "a crude and indigested mass, a lifeless lump, unfashioned and unframed, of jarring seeds and justly Chaos named" (*Metamorphoses*, I.7), and gods being born out of this "lifeless lump" are the first symbols of order, though showing the elements of man's proneness to distempered or disorderly behavior. And it is true that the Christian idea of "creatio ex nihilo" is very close to the Greek explanation of creation. Whatever is the first cause, chaos is only the initial stage in existence, and the moment man appeared on earth, his existence depended on the perception of order. But parallelly to forming symbols of order, man has been struggling with chaos. It is so because it is man who makes chaos and then realize that chaos exists. All creation follows natural laws except man who thinks that it is him who can create things, i.e. he is the creator of himself. It is him who enacts laws that he likes to consider similar to the force of natural laws. But the matter of fact is that man cannot follow the rules of his own imperfect laws, therefore he is the victim of his own utopianism, and another aftermath is that governing, which is concerned with particular things, cannot take place other than in a chaos that is produced by man. And he does it on purpose, Tilo Schabert writes: "If you steadily apply these methods [cf. footnote no. 7] you will erect a chaotic but powerful rule of which you will be the sole master." (Schabert 1989:42) Chaos is needed to establish and preserve power. The question is if liberal conception of power, based on a contract and reconciliation of interests by negotiation, can offset the reality of power. Liberals probably err on the judgment of their own methods because they fail to distinguish between the conditions and the goals of power. These two can never be identified unless one thinks that legitimacy of power can be fully rationalized. What has been evolving in the modern age is a dichotomy of the goals and conditions of power. The tendency shows that the more depoliticized, i.e. made rational, politics is, the more efforts should be exerted to create conditions for preserving power. Chaos in a liberal or plural society is intentionally caused not only by those having the executive power, but all the political agents who are involved in democratic policy-making in contrast to the rational functioning of institutions. The more universal one's claim to power is, the bigger

chaos one has to face; and the bigger the chaos is, the more rules or elements of the modern executive would have to be used which is founded on the separation or liberation of the executive from its clear subordination to law and its connection to justice (Mansfield 1996:302) John Rawls's suggestion to replace justice by fairness is just an intellectual expression of the modern conditions. Modern executive has become more and more entangled in rational legitimizing of the conditions of power, whereas a never seen multiplication of executive goals have emerged in a postcommunist world, or as Schabert suggests, "The government has to be a government of as many committees as there are issues" currently, of course. (Schabert 1989:232) The balance of the political and public policy has, seemingly, powerfully shifted from the previous to the latter, this is the reason for the proliferation of commissions, committees and the like do not look superfluous.

The scope of political action. It is noteworthy, however, to determine the scope of action of a politician. There is a gap between a statesman of antiquity and a politician of the modern age. The emphasis of political action in antiquity was more on foreign policy and war, whereas the modern politician should also have to focus upon public policy issues like education, health-care etc. The Roman state, for instance, had only a duty to collect taxes, field an army, maintain civil peace and administer justice for the wealthy and free citizens. J. E. Lendon writes: "The Roman Government did not undertake to provide food, housing, mass education, or any of the manifold social services taken for granted from modern governments." (Lendon 1997: 2.) A further difference in scope is that ancient statesmen looked upon the "people" as a chaotic mass. They did not want to change the character of the people, which would have been a sheer nonsense in their eyes, but had wanted to improve themselves. Plutarch is helpful again: "For as the hunter considers the whelp itself, not the bitch, and the horsedealer the foal, not the mare (for what if the foal should prove a mule?), so likewise were that politician extremely out, who, in the choice of a chief magistrate, should inquire, not what the man is, but how descended" (Comparison of Lysander with Sylla) It is the politician who can excel himself, and not the people which is whimsical and the behavior of which is difficult to calculate. So the scope is the perfectibility of the politician and not the man in general. Machiavelli devoted a lot of attention to the qualities of the people, which he regarded ungrateful, fickle, pretenders, dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager for gain and rebellious etc., but it did not occur to him to change the character of the people. It is something given and taken for granted, and more powerful than any virtue. It is Machiavelli who discovers the people for politics. But he professed that a politician should have to be able to handle the attitude and inclinations of the people "the only necessity of the prince is not to improve his character but to learn how to calculate or predict the behavior of the people with the sole purpose of preserving power. Power is what it has always been. With the rise of the concept of the innocent and good man, suggested mainly by Rousseau, a route was opened up to ameliorate people by education and by establishing better institutions. People are good, counterbalancing the realist view of man by Machiavelli, only the politicians are morally bad. In institutions, especially in written constitutions, we can trust, as if although man himself cannot be perfected, but his products, the institutions could be. Thus the scope of government has shifted from the statesman to the institution, by which the relevance of action as such was diminished, or more precisely, concealed, and the procedures or mechanisms of government were highlighted suggesting that the intellectual core of governing is to be found in the workings of institutions. The secret of modern politics is how to hide the real conditions

of power, if people had known them, they would completely refuse politics without being aware that what they get is perhaps better than what they would get if bare power would be put to show.

Media or creation of a virtual world. Another condition of the scope of political action, at least in the past few decades, is connected with the demands of mass media or political marketing. A successful politician should be able to use the media as part of his creative arsenal. What is striking with the media is not that is manipulative or more effective use of propaganda, but the intimacy of the politician's face that is presented to everyone. Politicians of the old days kept a good distance to the people, and even if he had wanted to get as close as possible to the people, very few of them could see the face of a statesman. So it is not enough for a politician today to act according to the mirrors of a prince, but he has to be able to regulate his facial appearance and the whole body language should serve the purpose of hiding bare power expressed by unintended metacommunicative means. And it is not just the TV, but all the relevant means that contribute to the building of a virtual reality of politics. Blogs are to be reckoned with, cameras or picture shooting devices are everywhere – the private life of a politician has so much shrunk that he does it good, if he does not try to hide it, but make an image of it making use of real elements to create a virtual reality of his private life (cf. Pres. Sarkozy's private life). Thus creativity and virtuality go hand in hand, and postcommunist reality is best described by the intended images created by the politician.

Feminism. Schabert was already alert to the problem of feminism with respect to positive discrimination (cf. Schabert 1989:228), but the full potential of this issue has evolved to a more status since the 1980s. Kevin White could swerve the gender issue by saying that –I don't really see women in [female] terms– (Ibid:229) Today feminism of various types is based on the assumption that all social and political institutions are constructed, which means that everything could be constructed differently. This is quintessential gnosticism; the stake is not that it is men or women who govern but the feminist construction of political knowledge rests on the assumption that knowledge can be –genderized– strengthening the erroneous opposition of political wisdom and practical wisdom, as if wisdom, based on human experience and thinking, is worth next to nothing. As if wisdom expressing the most comprehensive and universal thought could be relativized and replaced by a newly constructed political knowledge.

Taking these points together, one would be inclined to accept James Burnham's insight in the middle of the 20th century, that –In the simplest terms, the theory of the managerial revolution asserts merely the following [–] The conclusion of this period of transformation, to be expected in the comparatively near future, will find society organized through a quite different set of major economic, social, and political institutions and exhibiting quite different major social beliefs or ideologies. Within the new social structure a different social group or class – the managers – will be the dominant or ruling class.– (Burnham 1973:74) Burnham was right in perceiving that a new era of transformation would enhance the importance of managing the more and more complex of economic and social issues but he failed to notice that the conditions of using power require old and tried methods creatively applied to new circumstances – he also right to understand the nature of rule, that leaders are indispensable, but he was mistaken to turn Plato into a manager. This attempt is nothing else than one of the attempts to crush political wisdom in the name of an ever improving political knowledge. Unfortunately the deceptive character of Burnham's suggestion has proved to be

influential in the postcommunist world. Postcommunist world is partly the product of creativity of politicians like Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher or Michael Gorbachev, partly of social engineering that replaced truth by fairness long ago.

Government in a postcommunist world

What kind of an order is the postcommunist world? What are the symbols of this new world? Is it new at all? Schabert's statement that "A human community exists through its government or it does not exist." (Schabert 1989:266) cannot solve the problem of what he calls the paradox of *creatio continua*. In this sense the postcommunist world is not new. But it is not new in the sense of a new beginning either "because it is stricken by 'a practical paradox', a problem that requires 'institutions: carriers of continuity'" (Ibid:224) But in the case of postcommunist change of regime, it is not the institutions but the politicians who are the carriers of continuity. Institutions were changed, including the constitutions, but communist politicians remained using new symbols and images: the moment it was possible, they became the creative carriers of a new regime. It was possible only because people were simply ignorant of what government is about, and what role politicians play with making institutions work. In a more general level people were dissatisfied with their communist regimes in so far they did not function like the ones in the West. Once postcommunists introduced Western symbols and images under the name of system change, democratization, and Westernization, the whole issue boiled down to a merely pragmatic problem: all we need is a new set of institutions. Ideologically controlled societies came under the ideology of a postcommunist amalgam of what Voegelin detected as the different forms of gnosticism: "By gnostic movements we mean such movements as progressivism, positivism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, fascism, and national socialism." (Voegelin 1968:83) Each of these movements had either a political or an intellectual chance to implement its vision or exert an influence. Progressivism and positivism, hand in hand, dominated the 19th century, the other four had their momentum in the 20th century. Communism was the last trying to establish an order based on the transformation of "the history of order" into "the order of history" The order of history was perceived as historical determinism combined with progressivism and an overt hostility against metaphysics or visions of order that have transcendental roots. Atheism is a negation of cosmic order animating from a spiritual entity. For communists government is purely arbitrary, serves group interests, and its conditions and goals could be changed intentionally. According to communist truth allegedly found, the different levels of understanding of political issues are brought together by an overall ideology that is very close to the situation described by Voegelin as follows: "The reality experienced and symbolized by everyman's conscious existence was to be replaced by the Second Reality of speculation" (Voegelin 2000:65) Communism experimented with founding government on focusing on man's beastly part to achieve earthly paradise, which meant to satisfy all human needs. So the problem of political knowledge was solved by a second reality produced by a total ideology dedicated to concentrate power in the hands of those understanding the secret of history. Ideology, informed by history, has become modern man's response to the dichotomy of political wisdom and practical wisdom. If Tilo Schabert is right, then creativity, a mediator between political wisdom and practical wisdom, must have functioned under communism as well. And it

functioned, because communists initially did not care about exposing power in its bare and nude form. Later they came to understand that the bareness of politics or power should be concealed, this was the period of "reform communism" in a few communist countries like Poland or Hungary. Secondly, therefore, communists, confronted with the nature or reality of power, managed to acquire creativity of government: first, they seized power, then learned the lesson of Machiavellian wielding power. Postcommunists, who were yesterday communists, are completely aware of the demands of creativity of government "they know and apply execution as universal technique including all "the seven elements of the modern executive"(6); and they practice what Tilo Schabert named as "Boston Mirror for Magistrates"(7) In a postcommunist world, it is the postcommunists who possess real power because they have preserved the conditions of power that they had established before the technical or institutional change of the political system. They preserved their networks, including secret agencies, economic sector, cultural positions, and elements of civil society. Since the legitimacy of the postcommunist societies depend on the symbolic catching up with western civilization and capitalist economic development, in these countries privatization has been the political issue, and everyone close enough to the center of power has been active to capture the state by means of carving out as large a portion of private property as they can thus using government for not to govern. The clear case is that of Russia. Ivan Krastev has a point: "Managed democracy is a political regime that liberates the elite from the necessity of governing and gives them time to take care of their personal business."(Krastev 2006:59) By "managed democracy" Krastev means the most characteristic of postcommunist government "the capability of using and preserving power of the communist elite by means of power techniques so eloquently described by Machiavelli. It is an insight corroborating to the statement that it is creativity that governs "the only difference is that in a postcommunist country the mechanisms of power are less concealed, the creation of the conditions of power are more important than the goals of power.

The most touchy issue for postcommunists is the source of their legitimacy. They changed the focus of the legitimacy of their power. First there was, and remained all through, the communist ideology promising a better earthly living, second, after the gradual disillusionment with the symbols of communism, communists claimed "pragmatism" and "management skills" with which they can govern. Thus they have relied upon the managerial concept of government, but as a consequence of system change, they have also grown on the combination of positivist pragmatism, historical determinism, and liberal management of confronting interests. Already the name, "system change", betrays that communism was put an end to primarily in an institutionalized sense. Postcommunist world has developed a new ideology the hub of which includes democracy as a civil religion, positivism, and progressivism. Their creativity is founded on international interests (to avoid an unpredictable showdown with communists), the exhaustion of revolutionary imagination, and their skillful preservation of the conditions of their power. Now they are the main beneficiaries of the privatization, they control the media, the cultural background of their power, and the virtual reality of the postcommunist world in which symbols and images create a second reality just as vague as political power has always been for the ordinary people. What is more, by preserving the conditions of their power, they can interpret their own communist past. They own the past which is the greatest source of their legitimacy and creativity "things should not take place otherwise. Their political knowledge lost touch with seeking truth, they simply make use of the split between political wisdom and practical wisdom, which they

make absolute, even antagonize their relationship by the neutral assistance of modern political science, creating a virtual reality in which the politician as such is not important, but he is an expert who can manage things under any circumstances thus excluding the last bit of a link between power and morality. And Machiavelli is smiling again.

Conclusion

The oldest problem of political science is whether the knower can overbridge the gap between wisdom and knowledge was systematically already handled by Aristotle. He distinguished between political wisdom and practical wisdom as if they were of different essences, which I can only accept if we understand it as an epistemological insight. Under modern conditions the Aristotelian epistemological distinction was made radical, and the two were contrasted as if they belonged to different realities, as if the knower could place himself outside politics. Modern science antagonized the connection between political wisdom and practical wisdom (knowledge) claiming that the knower can step outside politics, and can take a so-called objective position which is based on distancing the knower from reality. By this move, modern political science separated political reality from political knowledge – what the politicians do is purely arbitrary and are the playthings of conditions. What they know about is no more than what they do, a kind self-awareness without meeting any requirements of modern science. On the other hand, modern political science developed a scientific position that concentrates upon particulars and pays attention only to those elements of politics and political behavior that are calculable – the institutions. Thus modern political science tends to shun the most important element of politics which is power because that would require a comprehensive and universal approach to politics. Post-behavioralist political science realizing how serious the problem is has returned to the original issues of politics but due to its modern scientific foundations everything they start dealing with comes very close to a normative-ideological standard. Even classical political philosophy has become ideological just because of the misunderstood nature of political knowledge. And ideology is just another means of concealing political reality. This is why the study of democracy has unavoidably turned into a universalist ideology (cf. Amartya Sen 1999) Postcommunism has its own universalist ideology that is composed of all the old elements of modern assumptions about knowledge summarized by Voegelin as gnosticism, and new elements like the changing concept of 'the demos' (cf. European Union seeking a demos), a shift to public policies from the political, and the feminist conception of political constructivism.

The only way out of this intellectual and political impasse is the return to reality. The difference between political wisdom and practical wisdom is relative and not substantive. Modern political science has mainly been dealing with second reality of politics. One should return to the relevant issues of politics, and it is power, the conditions of power and not justice, the politician, and not the institutions, the way politicians make things, and not how they should do them. It is only then that political wisdom and practical wisdom will be linked again reclaiming the name of the master science.

Notes

(1) An outspoken example is given by Robert Kagan who wrote that "I learned from my father that the problem with Straussians was that they were ahistorical. They were consumed with the great thinkers and believed the great thinkers were engaged in a dialogue with one another across time. This made Straussians slight the historical circumstances in which great thinkers did their thinking. Indeed, my father, the historian, taught me to mistrust not only Straussians but also political philosophy in general, and I have pretty much done so " though, again, I have to admit it is partly because I find it hard to understand." "I am not a Straussian. At least, I do not think I am. *The Weekly Standard*, 02/06/2006, Volume 011, Issue 20.

(2) Richard Sakwa says that after the fall of communism, in a broader sense, we all live in a post-communist world. Cf. *Postcommunism*. London: Open University Press, 1999. Introduction.

(3) Tilo Schabert: A Classical Prince: The Style of Francois Mitterand. In: B. Cooper and Ch. R. Embry (eds.): *Philosophy, Literature, and Politics. Essays Honoring Ellis Sandoz*. Columbia-London: University of Missouri Press, 2005.

(4) Suffice here to refer, for example, to the comparison of Lysander and Sylla. Plutarch found that "which was common to them both was that they were founders of their own greatness" but were different in that "Lysander had the consent of his fellow-citizens, in times of sober judgment, for the honours he received; nor did he force anything from them against their good-will, nor hold any power contrary to the laws." Or little further we read that Lysander was "more agreeable to law than Sylla" (In: *The Comparison of Lysander with Sylla*) There are several other references that make this distinction between a statesman who acts in accordance with the laws, and the one that disregards them. But it is important to note that it is "greatness" that decides the judgment of a statesman, all other aspects of a statesman are secondary.

(5) Cf. Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* in which he suggests that we are all equal with respect to creativity " we have to just discover it. Cf. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Basic Books, New York, 2002.

(6) Harvey C. Mansfield devoted a separate chapter to "Machiavelli and the Modern Executive" where he pointed out the centrality of execution in Machiavelli's works, and wrote that "Seven elements of the modern executive originate in Machiavelli: the political use of punishment; the primacy of war and foreign affairs over peace and domestic affairs, which generally increases the occasions for emergency; the use of indirect government, when ruling is perceived to be executing on behalf of someone or some group other than the ruler; the occasions of differences among regimes as wholes, through the discovery or development of techniques of governing applicable to all regimes; the need for decisiveness, for government is best done suddenly; the value of secrecy in order to gain surprise; and the necessity of the single executive, "one alone" to take on himself the glory and the blame." (Mansfield 1996:298)

(7) Tilo Schabert summarized the technique of creativity of power by enumerating the practical actions of a prince-like magistrate: divide et impera, prevent the existence of an umbrella group which covers the realm of your power, do not establish precise lines of authority, keep responsibilities blurred, make overlapping assignments, foment competition, engage several agencies in projects on similar turf, distribute from time to time chips of influence among your aides, launch periodically into a shake-up of the governmental apparatus, shuffle the personnel, create two layers of government, a visible and invisible one, by splitting governmental positions into nominal and real functions, become an expert in substituting a web of personal relationships for the system of government. (Schabert 1989:41)

References

- Arendt, Hannah (1994) *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Burnham, James (1973 [1941]) *The Managerial Revolution*. Indiana University Press.
- Krastev, Ivan (2006) Democracy's Doubles. *Journal of Democracy*, April, Vol. 17.
- Lendon, J. E. (1997) *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò³ (1998) *The Prince*. Transl. and introduced by Harvey C. Mansfield. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mansfield, Harvey C. (1996) *Machiavelli's Virtue*. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Plutarch (2001) *Parallel Lives*. Random House. Comparison of Fabius and Pericles. Transl. By John Dryden.
- Schabert, Tilo (1989) *Boston Politics: The Creativity of Power*. Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Schabert, Tilo (2005) A Classical Prince: The Style of Francois Mitterand. In: B. Cooper and Ch. R. Embry (eds.): *Philosophy, Literature, and Politics. Essays Honoring Ellis Sandoz*. Columbia-London: University of Missouri Press.
- Sen, Amartya (1999) Democracy as Universal Value. *Journal of Democracy* 10.3.
- Strauss, Leo (1989) On Classical Political Philosophy. In: *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*. Selected and Introduced by Thomas L. Pangle, Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Voegelin, Eric (1968) *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company.
- Voegelin, Eric (1998) *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*. Vol. 22. History of Political Ideas Vol. IV. Renaissance and Reformation. Columbia-London: University of Missouri Press.
- Voegelin, Eric (2000) *Order and History*. Volume V.: In Search of Order. The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin. Columbia-London: University of Missouri Press.